

Steiner (L. H.)
By the Author



HEALTH

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Prerequisite to National Success in Peace and in War

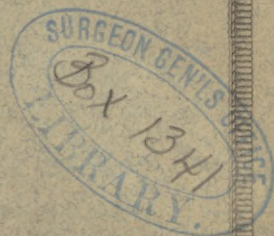
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FREDERICK CITY, MD.

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Health a Prerequisite to National Success in Peace and in War.

Success, whether personal or national, depends upon numerous contingencies. There must be certain antecedent conditions before one can even dare hope to secure it. These are moral, intellectual and physical. When they are present in due proportion success is always a probable result, if it be not forbidden by the very nature of the undertaking itself. If partially or wholly absent failure must be anticipated in the place of success. The general proposition, as applied to the moral and intellectual factors, is universally admitted. Every one can readily see that there must always be moral principle and some order of intellectual development present to ensure success, but the antecedent physical condition of health has not commanded the attention it deserves at the hands of publicists. It is proposed in this essay to dwell exclusively upon *it* as a necessary prerequisite to national success, and on this account to urge the subject of Hygiene upon the attention of our National and State Legislatures as of paramount importance. The old Spartan recognized the truth, that we shall endeavor to present, practically. He exposed the young in such manner that the young and puny—those whose constitutions were not of the strongest natural character, broke down under the exposure, while the others, who survived this brutal ordeal, were likely to grow up with such bodily health as would enable them to assume the duties of a rugged manhood, and to add by their prowess to the military fame of the nation. And thus the Spartan practice showed how they feared the burdens that the sick and weakly child might entail upon the nation, as well as how earnestly they longed for such citizens as would enable them to secure a continuation of success in the rough contests their very mode of existence obliged them to keep up. Other nations of less intellectual culture practically recognized the same truth also by ridding

themselves of the sick and aged adult when he ceased to add to their strength and prowess. For what possible use could a man be unless he was able to contend in the front rank with his companions, to aid them both in the hunt and the fight. Still, wherever Christianity has existed, or those instinctive notions of humanity that adhere to the soul in its normal condition have manifested themselves, tenderness to the decrepid and sick are found prevalent. But to secure the results which the Spartan attained in his mode of selection, to promote health in the healthy and to secure it for the sick, to retain the greatest amount of vigor for the use of the body politic by systematic scientific legislation, these have only become subjects of study in modern times, when science and philanthropy have joined hands in their efforts to solve the problem

The *mens sana* is an intangible and indemonstrable something, unless it possesses a *corpus sanum*, as its instrument or tool, by and through which it can make its presence felt, and demonstrate its wondrous powers. We are not ready to accept the materialistic view that, because a diseased brain does infallibly affect the immaterial something which must employ it through all its thinking, or because each mental operation causes the destruction of cerebral substance, the mental power has its *fons et origo*, in the highly organized instrument so essentially requisite for all its active operations. We are not ready to accept the materialistic theories of mind, although we must admit that modern research shows that the mind is unable to accomplish its normal work, unless the brain is in something like a normal condition. As in the use of steam, although it may be generated by the application of a proper amount of heat to water, still if the machinery, by which its expansive force is to be made efficacious, be not adapted for its employment, it is either useless, or becomes extremely dangerous, instead of highly useful; and all this without the necessity of our recognizing the engine as the generator of steam, so the mind, for the want of a suitable organic medium for its active exercise, may either manifest a powerless idiocy or the terrific power of insanity.

The brain must be in a healthy condition to ensure normal mental activity. But without the mind is in a state of normal activity, there can be neither individual or national success. There must be vivid, acute perceptions, careful accurate generalization, abundant skill in analysis and synthesis, and the habit of rapid, though certain deduction, all of which are needed to grasp what is known, and to lead to useful discoveries in what is knowable amid the unknown. All this is not only required in leading minds that give shape to the practical activity of a nation, but by the masses who are to carry out the conclusions attained by these minds, and to make them practical and useful. Hence we arrive at the first point in our investigation, that mental activity—which is the life and soul of all forms of successful activity—is dependent upon that normal condition of the cerebral organs, which can only be found in health. An abnormal brain, or a brain in a morbid condition, cannot admit of such mental activity as will result in the origination of those plans that are the basis of success, or in their efficient development and practicalization even when formulated.

And yet a healthy brain and nervous system, are such rare phenomena at the present time, that one may almost query, whether they are not in their very nature, exceptional? With the high-pressure, under which Americans prefer to labor, the brain and nerve-force seems to have been thoroughly used-up long before the time allotted as the natural limit of human life, and then, in lieu of its mighty vigor, we find nought but the certain indications of its slow, but gradual extinction.—Abuse of highly organized tissue must result in utter loss. Hence we find our professional and literary men forced to lay aside their studies at an age when they should be in the very prime of their strength, and to seek recreation after the ability to recuperate has been entirely lost. The ranks of the army of valetudinarians, that crosses the ocean yearly for the vain purpose of seeking the health they have rashly thrown away, are yearly increasing, while its members find too late, that the fountains of health, when thoroughly polluted, are beyond the curative influence of any purifying agency. Each victim

of such suicidal treatment of his brain, comes to a realizing sense of how little he has accomplished, by unduly taxing its power, without the employment of regular intervals for rest and recuperation, in comparison with the greater work he might have accomplished under other and more rational self-discipline. But this is attained at a period too late for remedy, and he drops out of the ranks of mental laborers to make way for others, who will probably derive no benefit from his example, and thus, we are having spasmodic brain-activity, and loss of longevity, instead of a uniformly increasing brain-power conjoined with longevity.

Necessarily, then, a mental activity which is not uniform, but spasmodic, and which is associated with such a drain upon the vital powers as to destroy their integrity, which, in a word, does not depend upon health, but upon morbid paroxysms, is not adapted to success. It is true that the brain is liable to be affected in many ways by disease, independent of mental effort, and that, notwithstanding the greatest possible care, it may still take on such morbid action, but this does not proceed from any normal, regular exercise of all its powers, or from a systematic employment of its functions properly relieved at stated intervals by rest, for the purpose of recuperation. It is the spasmodic overwork that racks the machine and speedily puts it beyond the possibility of repair. It is this that lays the master-mind under the ground just when all his bright conceptions are attaining full realization, and when success is about bursting upon his vision. It is this that shatters the brain and shortens the period of human intellectual labor, that brings on the series of morbid phenomena that baffle the pathologist as well as the therapist. And yet, constant, *steady* mental labor, if properly varied, may be performed for many years with less permanent injury than a month devoted to the spasmodic over work now under consideration. All parts of our wonderful microcosm were created and adapted for regular labor, but in accordance with laws that demand due recognition of their existence and obedience to their requirements. Illustrations of this fact are abundant with the German students. They perform immense tasks,

have a proclivity to dive down to the very depths of every subject they take hold of, but they are never hurried. *Ohne Hast, Ohne Rast*—unhasting, unresting. Brilliance is not a characteristic of these students, but accuracy, certainty and reliability, so that their conclusions are always received with unfeigned respect, even by those who oppose them. They reach success eventually, when others are forgotten, whose meteoric brilliancy—the result of abnormal employment of mental powers—for a while dazzled but was finally extinguished in impenetrable darkness.

Let us now glance at the effects of disease in other portions of the human economy. Let us imagine the anomaly of a healthy mind in a diseased body, of a healthy nervous system presiding over circulatory, digestive and muscular functions in a state of disease, and see what hopes of success exist for the individual who possesses this anomalous arrangement. To use the illustration of the steam engine again, of what value would be the best possible boiler constructed so as to economize the greatest amount of heat furnished by the fuel employed, and to supply the greatest amount of steam of any desirable degree of tension, if the piston-rods and valves were defective, if the machinery to utilize this great steam-power was inadequate to the task imposed upon it? Such an inadequate arrangement is possible in an inorganic combination, and we can see how utterly useless it would be for practical purposes, how the manufacturer would fail to receive a proper return for the expense and labor expended upon his machinery, how a much inferior boiler, with effective machinery in good order, would meet his wants and be acceptable for practical purposes.

To insure permanent success health must reign throughout the *whole* body. Here the folly as well as the injurious results of many of the amusements, at present popular throughout the land, comes vividly to light. The boating and baseball mania that has seized so many of our colleges with the consequent huge development of certain muscles and overstrain of the nervous and circulatory systems, the excessive practice of gymnastic exercises in any form, the habit of exposing the body to extremes of temperature without due pro-

tection; all these afford painful illustrations of the effects of overstrain of certain portions of the body without proper consideration for the due development of other portions, quite as important to a state of normal health.

The command to earn bread by the sweat of the brow did not imply an overtasking of any portion of a body, but the due exercise of all its functions, with proper intervals for rest and repair of waste. The habits and customs of civilized life are seemingly directly opposed to such requirements. Among these are the disguises which food is made to assume in its preparation for the table, the condiments it receives from the fashionable cook to make it attractive to morbid appetites, the temperature at which it is eaten—sometimes far above that natural to the body, and again as nearly approximate to zero as the frigorific mixtures to which it has been exposed will bring it—and, above all, the rapidity with which American habit is accustomed to force such heterogeneous mixtures into the patient, long-suffering stomach, and the unseemly hours during which this same organ is forced to toil and labor when it should be at rest. Our clothing is also an obstacle to health. The child is clad, not in accordance with the teachings of physiology, but with the insane ravings of fashion. At an age when rapidity of growth requires that it should be protected against extremes of temperature, portions of the body are exposed in midwinter without any protection, so that the little victim is blue and chattering from the cold instead of glowing with the roseate tinge that should mantle the cheeks of a well-clad child. Then the evil results of overcrowded population, subjected to no sanitary regulations, or so restive under them as to employ every possible means to thrust them aside. These have become so serious in character, on account of the distress, suffering and death they have caused, that one is almost compelled to recognize, from a sanitary standpoint, the propriety of the cynic's designation of a city as "an ulcer on the body politic;" they challenge the most careful attention of all thoughtful minds, sanitary and medical, in the country to discover how they may be reduced in character and number, if not wholly eradicated.

Thus the body is not only unfitted for its work by an undue use of certain organs, but, even where there is moderate and temperate use, the habits of civilized life interfere with repair of waste and expose it to malarious and other atmospheric causes which sap the foundations of life and lead to untimely death. The brain is overtasked until it refuses to perform the labors imposed upon it, and disease renders mental effort an impossibility; the muscular system is similarly treated and premature senility visits organs that might have been active and useful to a moderate old age; and where neither of these errors have been committed the habits and customs of civilization so enfeeble the body that both mind and body expend their power at an early age and readily yield to the slightest attack of disease, or rather lose what constitutes health, and hence are diseased.

But these results are incompatible with success in the world. It is not the sickly brain and the emaciated body that ordinarily lead the van in the professions, in the trades or in any avocations, whether pursued on land or sea. There are rare cases where a gigantic will enables a man, as it were, to overcome the clogs that his mortality lays upon him, while he wields the pen, pencil or chisel of genius, electrifies nations by his wondrous plans for their progressive advancement, contrives machinery that puts new industries in operation, or directs enormous mercantile enterprises. We look upon all such cases as exceptional, and are ever ready to give special credit to the will that conquers such tremendous difficulties and rises triumphant above the depressing influences by which it is environed. Ordinarily a totally different result is expected, and success demands in the individual just that *mens sana in corpore sano*, to secure which for all men is the end and object of all hygienic labor—the sum and substance of the theories and practice of modern Hygiene. We fight disease, we contend steadily against morbid influences, simply because we long to secure for the race the full measure of years to which it may be entitled and the greatest possible vigor of body to carry out the duties that fall to its lot during its earthly existence. We labor to secure health and

long life, because these tend to insure that *success* which makes man best meet the earthly object and end of life, and all this without reference to the particular sphere of labor to which the individual may be called.

Let us now look upon the relation of health to national success. While the nation is an aggregation of individuals, it is at the same time a political organism, subject to laws and conditions which more directly affect its members than would be possible in a mere aggregation. Were it the latter alone there would be no oneness of spirit pervading its citizens, no effort would be made for success as a nation in the arts of peace, and no other motive for success in war than that which bind casual travelers together to resist the attacks of wayside robbers and murderers. But where men, whether related by ties of affinity or drawn together primarily by necessity or choice, have a national instinct developed, it seems accompanied by the nucleus of a social vitality which, in time, binds them together as a political organism, separate and distinct from all other nations, endowed with distinctive interests to secure which is one of their principal aims in peace, and for whose protection they will take up arms and risk their lives. How can health secure the success of such a political organism in peace and in war?

Every hour of sickness is so much genuine pecuniary loss to the nation, of which the individual is a constituent portion. It not only keeps him from contributing his own quota towards the general intellectual and material wealth of the country (and that is a serious loss in itself), but it also consumes the energy and labor of many others by absorbing their time and attention in ministrations to the sick, so weakens the energy of others by the anxiety they undergo that their duties are performed only with a minimum of their native energy, and monopolizes the faculties and time of others still whose profession requires them to apply themselves solely to the treatment of disease. Could we reckon up the sum total of this loss to the nation the figures would probably be considered a strong argument in favor of hygienic study and inflexible hygienic practice of the most cogent character. Each

particular case of disease in itself does not seem to abstract much strength from the body politic, but the aggregate of all the cases that may prevail in any given year, comprising those laboring under chronic or acute maladies, old and young, rich and poor, cultured and ignorant, workers with the brain and those who merely employ muscle; take all these and then the classes of persons who are affected by the sickness prevalent, give a pecuniary value to the loss really experienced, and show what a bane sickness is to a community. It is said that whatever touches the pocket reaches the most vital part of the man of business; is there not here an argument sufficiently acute to penetrate to this sensitive centre and to produce an earnest anxiety that this immense annual loss should be diminished as far as possible by the due recognition of the necessity of sound sanitary regulations and their impartial administration. The wise man of business shows his wisdom and skill not only in the accumulation of wealth, but in its proper preservation, and whenever chronic losses attend his steps he feels that he is not successful.

Let us now see how the want of healthy tone in its citizens affects the success of a nation, and the investigation here requires an inquiry into its effects upon brains and muscle-workers separately.

To control and direct always requires a higher order of talent than to execute. This fact is recognized by the world, inasmuch as it freely awards the inventor a larger compensation than it is willing to give the machinist who constructs in accordance with his plans, and the honoarium, which the professional man receives, bears no relation to the time required in any particular case, but is fixed with due regard to its magnitude and the years of antecedent preparatory labor he has spent in preparation for professional work. Thus brain-work is recognized as something of the highest value, because without it there is no advance, no improvement, nothing but dull stagnation. When the thinkers of a nation are actively at work all is life and activity throughout its length and breadth; agriculture extracts from its rich soil, made richer by artificial fertilizers, food

for the support of its citizens, manufactures increase in consequence of the invention of ingenious machines, lowering price and increasing demand, commerce enters all the ports of the world and secures a ready exchange for its natural products and the results of its manufactures, the fine arts begin to thrive and cast the refining influence of their culture over rich and poor, and legislation becomes better adapted to meet the wants of all and to throw the protection of law over all portions of the body politic. But this is attainable only where healthy brains are active, and not where effeminacy or any other deleterious agency has impaired the vitality of a people. The example of Rome is a trite one, and yet its value can never be overestimated. The Roman had ceased to be a vigorous thinker, had lost his robust health when he yielded to the seductive charms of luxury and learned to find his greatest happiness in the cultivation of effeminacy and vice. Then the fall of the national greatness began, and Rome became an easy prey to barbarous nations. It is a fearful period in a national history when its citizens begin to disregard those laws that regulate high physical health, and thus pave the way for the neglect of the arts that insure its prosperity. The loss of a healthy tone of body with its thinkers becomes the premonitory indication of a loss of its greatness.

The want of healthy tone, also leads to the deterioration of those who are to carry out the plans and execute the thoughts of its brain-workers. The best laid plans are useless unless they are vigorously carried out by those who undertake their execution. And, as there can be no vigorous labor except where health prevails, so all the activity and energy that should manifest their presence, wherever agriculture, mechanics and commerce are cultivated, must depend upon the existence of such health. The muscle that directs the plough, the plane and saw, or the course of the vessel over the broad ocean, must receive its tone and vigor from genuine bodily health. The earth is to be penetrated in search of precious or useful metals, canals are to be dug and railroads built for the purposes of free inter-communication between distant re-

gions, edifices for private comfort or public convenience are to be constructed, the countless requirements of an advanced civilization are to be satisfied; all these are demanded in time of peace, and the demand cannot be met unless health nerves the arm and gives tone to the human muscle that is called into service.

Peace is the blessing most attractive to the civilization of the present age. Nations no longer recognize the battle-field as the only plain on which they can best contend in fair rivalry with each other. But peace does not imply indolent stagnation, for rather does it demand earnest, active, untiring labor. Its banner floats most proudly over citizens who are striving to advance their national greatness by new triumphs over nature, by new victories over difficulties that may have proven obstacles to their ancestors. It is no friend to sloth, and cannot long survive failing physical strength. Just as the human body, when once under the power of disease, is an easy prey to every deleterious influence floating in the atmosphere, so a nation, when the glow of health no longer marks its citizens and stimulates them to continued exertion, becomes an easy conquest to its enemies. It has suffered its locks to be shorn, and the effect of Delilah's work becomes evident when the hour for the trial of its strength is at hand. Thus, although we do not claim health as the only prerequisite to national success in peace, we see it is a condition which cannot and dare not be overlooked, because it gives strength to the arm and energy to the body, whose activity must more or less determine this success.

There is also another advantage resulting from health that may require a word, and that is, the patience and cheerfulness which it gives to the citizens. Impatience and discontent are frequently present, even in the midst of material prosperity, and they always detract from the happiness of a people, but where health reigns they are not so much at home, and can with little effort be driven away. Patience and cheerfulness are not found where malaria abounds; they do not reign amid the polluted atmosphere of a crowded tenement-house; they have no home where bad food and inadequate clothing pre-

vail; they are not the normal companions of suffering, distress and disease, but they are most naturally and frequently met with, where health reigns and dispenses its great blessings. And are they not necessary to success—can indeed, there be full, satisfactory success without them?

The conditions which ensure success in peace are precisely those that prepare a nation for war, whenever it breaks out. Love for home is intensified when the latter has become the abode of happiness and prosperity, and will array a people quickly in arms should danger threaten from within or without. But how is health a prerequisite to success in the troublous times of war?

If her best minds are ever needed in the history of a nation, it is when she undertakes to carry on a war. Presumptively her enemies will avail themselves of all the talent at their command, so as to intensify their own strength, to detect the weak point of those against whom they are to contend on the field of battle, to employ every fair, and even unfair means, to secure their own success at any and every cost. All this must be met and counteracted by minds well-read in the lore of the military art, quick to comprehend the necessities of a campaign, ready to recognize the wants of their own soldiers, and their strong as well as weak peculiarities, and always prepared to present new plans for new exigencies as they may arise, possessed of great executive ability that will manifest itself, not only in the establishment of thorough discipline among the men, in providing food and clothing suited to their wants, and in selecting and superintending proper subordinate officers, but shining pre-eminently bright in the midst of battle, so as to secure not only victory, but to make the best use of the same after it has been won. Such minds are not commonly met with in valetudinarians, but in men of sound health, and without them a nation may pour out its wealth and its best blood upon the field of battle to no purpose. If given to the doubt and hesitation that spring from diseased bodies acting upon imperfectly balanced minds, if harassed by bodily ailments that interfere with the normal exercise of cool judgment, the military knowledge of commanding officers will

only serve to show how unfitted they are to take charge of the honor and safety of a nation.

We say, then, that health is an essential requisite in the case of the commanders of armies, because they need full possession of all the faculties of mind and body to superintend and conduct the operations entrusted to their care, and that the nation which overlooks this qualification exposes itself to certain discomfiture and defeat. But health must also pervade the ranks of those who are to execute the plans of the officers, in order that they may endure the hardships of camp and garrison life, press forward in time of battle with enthusiasm and courage, bear the wounds received from the enemy and the necessary surgical treatment these may require, and, in a word, be ready to do and to suffer for the national cause in every situation they may be placed. The truth of this proposition will readily be admitted, and yet it has only been practically recognized in these latter days in the way of supplying sanitary aids and supervision so as to guard the soldier's health throughout the whole of his exposure and peril.

If our discussion has sustained the proposition proposed at the outset, what practical lesson necessarily presents itself to our minds as a legitimate deduction from these truths? Undoubtedly, that since health is necessary to national success, it is incumbent upon government to give serious consideration to the subject of sanitary science, to enact laws in regard to the sanitary conditions of the cities and towns that will cause the banishment of morbid causes now prevalent, although preventible, and to spread before the people all information that will aid them in securing the greatest possible freedom from disease. Economy of life and health is an economy that should attract the attention of our municipal, State and National councils, because citizens in the vigor of health are the sturdy supports on which the wealth, dignity and prosperity of a nation largely depend.

The question of sanitary science is not only of interest to the physician and publicist, but it comes directly home to every one. It may be that in health we do not so readily recognize the mutual dependence of the citizens of a commu-

nity upon each other, but when contagious disease appears in any locality, the brotherhood of men is at once established by the readiness with which the subtle poison exerts its power on all sides regardless of position in the social scale of the individual in whom it was first manifested. Hence the general health of a community depends upon sanitary conditions that prevail throughout all its families, and it is just as important that the lowliest citizens should be cared for in this regard as the wealthiest and most cultured.

